

CORP Public Outreach Workshop
Meeting Notes
Stockton 11/8/07
1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

These notes were compiled from the Stockton workshop and represent the comments made by the participants. A “-” signifies a participant’s comment and change in speaker.

Opening Comments

-Our PAL program has 250 participants in Girl’s Softball, 350 kids in the Junior Giants Baseball, coordinates the annual Sober Graduation and flag football, participates in the annual Huntington Beach Play Day, bringing 40 kids to the last one, does the Cops For Kids Christmas program, and is one of 125 State Police Activities Leagues throughout the state.

Current Challenges

-The challenge in her job is the cost of land and improvements. The political pressure keeps the parks and recreation fees too low to support the existing programs and facilities. The cost of land and materials are increasing which effectively diminishes acquisition opportunities. There is a lack of political support to meet service goals.

-There's a severe lack of facilities space and funding for the PALs programs. Developers are more interested in building homes than in building ball fields. It is difficult to coordinate with the lack of facilities. Outside organizations also contribute to the wear and tear on the existing facilities. The key to PAL is providing opportunities to kids at no cost and so PALS depends on donations that fund PAL activities. There is a lot of competition for the no- or low-cost community facilities.

Partnering and Outreach Possibilities

-Sacramento could do a better job of partnering, especially with schools, and mentioned that their after school high school programs such as homework and school plays led to a reduction in vandalism. There is good collaboration with schools using joint-use agreements. More schools are going into lockdown after school is out. Agencies could bring in groups (non-profit, other governmental agencies, etc.) to collaborate with developing new recreation sites. Sacramento is currently looking at their master plan and developing a regional natural park to look at non-profits and etc.

-Many agencies do not operate their own facilities so the facilities that are available (schools, etc) are constantly booked. The facilities are wearing out from overuse.

Programming

It was suggested that case studies could be added as examples to the CORP that suggest programs that could point to benefits for local programs.

-Our PALs program had 2,000 kids participate last year and has been established for 13 years and operates solely on donations. The coaches and the

steering committee are all volunteers but PALS competes City Parks which needs the participant fees to help fund their department. PAL does offer activities different from those offered by City Parks, such as softball, junior giants baseball and etc. The City offers a high school after school program that was so successful that the city could see a reduction of vandalism and other crimes generally associated with youth. The city provided start up money. Many of our community based recreation programs are well established and use word of mouth to gain support. Primarily volunteer based.

Health

-Sacramento has the Fourth R after school program, which is more than just recreation; it offers cooking programs and adult day care for Alzheimer's patients, which serves a real need and helps parks and recreation stay relevant. School facilities are being used for night activities. The program allows Alzheimer's patient caregivers to drop off their charges in a safe facility and gives the caregiver a needed break from their responsibilities. Sacramento also has summer parks programs.

Relevance of Parks and Recreation and Trends to Note

One trend is that with more development the houses are getting bigger and the lots are getting smaller. The Sacramento standard is 5 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents. This standard is getting harder to meet and the city is looking at new ways to meet the standard such as counting indoor gyms and rooftop gardens. Sacramento is also doing outreach to find out what people want. They've found that people would like to be near rivers, people feel smaller parks and okay and that they want linkages to neighborhoods. People also enjoy open space along creeks.

-The city of Los Banos has asked developers for open space and turf areas but is moving toward built facilities (more direct purpose instead of general purpose) such as amphitheaters, skate parks, shade structures and soccer fields with lights and is working on a city general plan. PAL doesn't have a voice in these negotiations but can voice its need to the commissioners, city council members and the city planners.

-Sacramento's planning staff gives parks-related input regarding utilities but could use more discussions with city planners and council members. Good communication in Sacramento between planners and recreation professionals. A team approach. Fire, police, planners, recreation, etc. all together at the table. Many people see development as a bad thing but development proposals can include open space for recreation opportunities.

Linkages, Transportation and Access

-The State PAL and the city of Los Banos both split the cost of transporting PAL's kids to Huntington Beach Play Day using chartered buses. A PALS telemarketer had raised the fund to pay for everything else.

-BART and Sacramento's Light Rail are used for access. The challenge is that public transport is sited near areas with high housing and business densities but doesn't consider access to parks and open spaces. Parks reduce population

density. Transportation agencies get funded according to population density. Therefore, transportation agencies do not want parks near their lines.

-The American Planning Association has eleven Briefing Papers on its webpage: <http://www.planning.org/cpf/briefingpapers.htm> and some good information on how cities use parks and on climate change.

Data Clearinghouse

Community support should involve nearby colleges, connecting students with internship programs and jobs in parks and recreation.

Fresno PAL uses Fresno State University students through the AmeriCorps program. Sacramento also uses UC Davis Landscape architecture students and San Jose State also has recreation internship programs.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Huntington Beach Play Days puts some kids in tents for the first time, involves them in various activity stations such as swimming, a skateboard demo, boogie boarding and etc. In the evenings there are dances and movies. Forty kids from Los Banos participated last year at this one-night event.

-Sacramento is currently transitioning from sprawl to a big city mentality. People want more open space and natural opportunities.

California State Parks' OHV program has a youth focus on 'treading lightly' which is part of protecting resources.

-The littering problem isn't really addressed but the kids are asked to help clean up after the Huntington Beach Play Day.

-The city of Sacramento promotes sustainability, including a recycling program learned in the schools that they hope will carry through. Children are influenced at an early age by the positive aspect of recycling programs.

-Los Banos is just starting its first recycling program now.

We heard from foothill cities that are fighting implementing a reduced waste stream. Creating workdays can help instill conservation values.

Increased population has a large impact on infrastructure.

-Los Banos is experiencing growth pains and it's waste water plants need to be redone for example.

Funding and Facilities

-Los Banos PAL doesn't write grants.

Others suggested tapping into other school aid to get help writing grants and coming to the CPRS conference to attending workshops such as the past offering on how to use the online census data through the Tiger files (Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing system). Grants can be a great help but filling them out is foreboding.

-We need a centralized clearinghouse for innovative practices. State Parks could do a grants webpage that highlights one new and innovative grant project each week and included information about innovative partnerships and practices. The should be the state's responsibility. This list could be a valuable resource to aide agencies in seeing other projects that worked that could be applied to their agency.

-The City of Sacramento did a recent phone survey on their Recreation Master Plan

For a lot of people a park is a park and they don't distinguish between a local, regional or state park.

Conclusions

California's park system had a problem with outreach for meeting participants. The California Parks & Recreation Society conference didn't support using conference attendees for soliciting input on this process although the conference seems to be a logical venue for feedback.